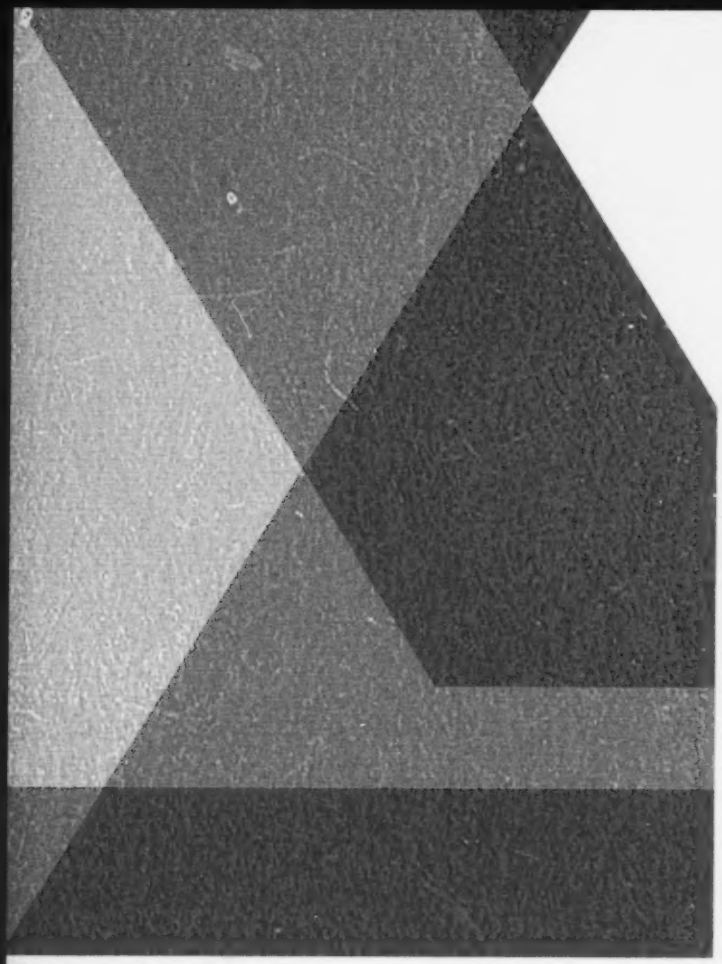

Business Plan 2018–19

Department of Community Services

NOVA SCOTIA

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Message from the Minister

On behalf of the Department of Community Services, we are pleased to present the Annual Business Plan for 2018-2019. Community Services offers support to vulnerable individuals, families, and children, helping them meet their basic needs, and making sure they are safe from abuse and violence. That is why we are investing in the changes we are – to make sure that those supports are the most effective they can be for individuals, their families, and their communities.

One of the main ways we are working to achieve this goal is through our continued transformation of programs and services. We are now about to enter the third and final phase of our Transformation project – the implementation and transition phase. This is a phase that will take several years, because of the magnitude of the work required. Once completed, the department and its programs and services will look dramatically different than the way they do today.

We'll have more sustainable, predictable programs, with improved and measurable client outcomes. Transformed programs will ensure the system is working as efficiently as possible, and most importantly, that programs are producing results for our clients.

Community Services is working alongside other social policy departments to build an action plan to reduce poverty in Nova Scotia. Through this Blueprint, government is investing $20 million over four years, having begun in 2017-18. The Blueprint is helping to forge partnerships among departments, levels of government, non-profits and communities to alleviate poverty in the province. In its first year, the Blueprint attracted almost 200 applications for Community Grants and Government Investment opportunities. In 2018-2019, year two, a total of $4 million will be provided to further this important work.

We're working to help our clients with disabilities participate more fully in their communities, resulting in greater independence and better outcomes. Part of this goal involves moving more people into community-based options, including small option homes. In achieving this, we are creating a more inclusive and accessible Nova Scotia for them.

Our Employment Support and Income Assistance program ESIA provides basic assistance, special needs, and Pharmacare support, which benefit about 40,000 people.

I am pleased that we have announced the introduction of a Standard Household Rate, and an Enhanced Employment Income Exemption Structure, with a commitment to full implementation in the 2019-2020 fiscal year. These initiatives will give our clients more predictability for their monthly payments, and will provide administrative simplicity for caseworkers.

Research is clear that working with vulnerable and at-risk children and families with a preventative and proactive approach can help improve their living conditions – and improve parents' ability to provide the best possible care for their children. Prevention and early intervention is a proactive and effective approach to strengthening children, youth, and families and building their resilience, ultimately mitigating the need for more intrusive, statutory interventions.

We are committed to strengthening our child welfare prevention and early intervention efforts. Community Services partners with, and provides funding to, over a hundred community-based organizations to deliver prevention and early intervention programs and services to some of Nova Scotia's most vulnerable children and families across the province.

We remain committed to helping victims of sexual violence in our province. Ongoing funding will help prevent and respond to sexual abuse and exploitation of youth and children, including human trafficking. Funding for the Prevention Innovation Grants is in addition to programs and services that government invests in annually, including: Sexual Assault Center funding; the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program; victim services; and the Independent Legal Advice Program.

We will continue working with our partners to promote safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments for children and families through community-based programs, services, and supports.

I extend my deepest appreciation to the passionate staff of Community Services, Housing Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Council on the Status of Women, and all our service delivery partners. Their commitment to helping Nova Scotians who need it most is the driving force in building a stronger Nova Scotia.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Honourable Kelly Regan

Minister of Community Services

Mandate

The overall mandate of the Department of Community Services is to provide for people in need. The services provided by the department form Nova Scotia's social safety net and play a significant role in contributing to better futures for Nova Scotians and improving the overall health and well-being of communities throughout the province.

DCS is committed to a sustainable social service system that promotes the independence, self-reliance, and security of the people we serve. This is achieved through excellence in service delivery, leadership, and collaboration with our partners.

The programs and services provided by the department are key to the social fabric of Nova Scotia, and also contribute to the success of the work of the core social departments of government including Health and Wellness, Education and Early Childhood Development, Labour and Advanced Education, and Justice.

Core Functions

The department has three core business areas: Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA); Child, Youth & Family Supports (CYFS); and the Disability Support Program (DSP). Services are delivered under the authority and direction of the following legislation:

- Children and Family Services Act;
- Employment Support and Income Assistance Act;
- Homes for Special Care Act;
- Municipal Housing Corporations Act;
- Protection of Persons in Care Act; and
- Social Assistance Act

Departmental expenditures consist primarily of grants and contributions – 84% of the total budget– to individuals in need and organizations providing services on behalf of the department. The remaining 16% covers operating costs - including operating 59 offices across the province, and paying approximately 1,600 DCS staff who are committed to a vision of constant improvement in the lives of those in need.

DCS is currently transforming to improve and enhance its programs, interventions, and services. In carrying out its mandate, DCS is challenged by an increased demand for program expansion and improved service delivery during a time of fiscal restraint. These factors have led to the need to modernize services to ensure DCS is providing sustainable programs that respond to the needs of Nova Scotia's most vulnerable citizens. That is what we call transformation. This will continue in 2018-19, as the department continues to develop and implement changes to its programs and service delivery model to achieve the best possible outcomes for clients within a sustainable social system.

Employment Support and Income Assistance

Employment Support and Income Assistance delivers two programs to Nova Scotians who are struggling to meet their basic needs: Income Assistance, and Employment Support Services.

Income Assistance provides a personal and shelter allowance to support recipients in accessing basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. A special needs allowance may also be provided to assist with needs unique to the recipient's health or current circumstances, such as special dietary requirements, transportation for medical needs, child care, and telephone for health and safety reasons.

Employment Support Services provides employment-related supports to both youth at risk, and ESIA clients to help facilitate movement towards employment and independence for a brighter future. The Department has, on average, 26,000 Income Assistance cases per month, equating to approximately 40,000 beneficiaries. Of those, around 4,600 receive support from Employment Support Services monthly.

Eligible ESIA recipients, as well as their spouses and dependents, can also access the Pharmacare Program to receive help with the cost of prescribed drugs, devices, and services. This program services approximately 40,000 people who receive assistance from the department.

The department also provides the Nova Scotia Child Benefit, a non-taxable monthly payment provided to low-income families to assist with the costs of raising children under age 18.

Child, Youth and Family Supports

Child, Youth, and Family Supports delivers programs to ensure that children are protected from abuse and neglect, and that children receive the care essential for their well-being. CYFS provides services to children, youth, and families in Prevention and Early Intervention, Child Protection, and Placement Services.

Prevention and Early Intervention programming helps address issues early to ensure the healthy development and well-being of vulnerable and at-risk children and youth, prevent family breakdown, and mitigate the need for more intrusive, statutory interventions.

Child Protection Services has the mandate under the *Children and Family Services Act* to protect children from abuse or neglect, while making every effort to keep families together. Even when matters proceed through the court system, families often work cooperatively with child protection social workers. The circumstances that bring a child or family to the attention of child protection dictate the type of services the child or family may require. They may participate in services to enhance parenting skills, services to understand and manage their anger management, addictions treatment, or many other kinds of counselling programs as needed.

Placement Services matches children with resources when children are unable to remain in their own homes on a temporary or long term basis. This includes Foster Care, Adoption, and Residential Services. Foster Care encompasses recruitment, monitoring, and support for foster families. Starting January 2017, the number of foster homes began to steadily increase for the

first time in six years. Adoption includes assessment and approval for those families seeking to provide permanency for children through adoption as well as support, based on the child's identified needs. Residential services are provided via a combination of 19 government and private facilities, licensed in accordance with the *CFSA*.

Disability Support Program

The Disability Support Program serves adults with intellectual disabilities, long-term mental illness, and physical disabilities in a range of community-based, residential, and vocational/day programs. Approximately 5,500 participants were served by the DSP program in 2017-18.

DSP promotes a participant's independence, self-reliance, security, and social inclusion. The goal of the program is to support participants at various stages of their development and independence through a range of programs. These are provided through community-based-residential and vocational/day programs.

As DSP continues to transform, we will reduce reliance on large facilities, increase capacity to better serve participants in communities, and enhance programs to improve quality of life and social inclusion for all participants, as well as some families with children by providing respite and other supports.

Agencies

Housing Nova Scotia

Housing is more than a roof over our heads. It means family, it means neighbourhoods, and it's the place we call home.

Housing Nova Scotia is the primary housing delivery agency in Nova Scotia. It is responsible for ensuring access to safe, suitable, and affordable housing for all Nova Scotians. The organization is a provincial government corporation and is administratively aligned with the Department of Community Services. It is staffed by more than 90 employees, who deliver and design programs for low-income Nova Scotians across the housing spectrum. It relies on the expertise and professionalism of its Housing Authorities to operate the Province's public housing stock, which comprises over 11,500 subsidized rental units. Housing Nova Scotia also delivers programs to help lower income homeowners maintain safe and affordable housing, through grants and loans for home repairs and adaptations.

Housing Nova Scotia strives to ensure all Nova Scotians can live in a home that's right for them, at a price they can afford, in a healthy, vibrant and diverse community that offers the services, supports, and opportunities they need. The organization delivers innovative housing strategies that contribute to the overall health and well-being of Nova Scotians and the sustainable development of the province.

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women was established in 1977 under the *Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act*. Its mandate is to bring issues affecting the lives of women and girls in Nova Scotia to the attention of the Minister. The Advisory Council is composed of citizen leaders who reflect the diversity of women across Nova Scotia and who have demonstrated interest and involvement in women's issues.

The Status of Women office provides research, policy advice, and information services in pursuit of equality, fairness, and dignity for all women in Nova Scotia. To advance these goals, the Status of Women office works collaboratively across government departments, agencies, academia, community groups, and women-serving organizations, and is responsible for operational and administrative supports to transition houses, women's centres, and Alice Housing. The Status of Women office is also leading *Standing Together*, Nova Scotia's coordinated approach to preventing domestic violence.

Collaboration & Partnerships in 2018-19

The nature of the mandate of DCS makes collaboration and partnerships absolutely essential. Some examples of those partnerships include:

- Over the next three years, DCS will co-lead the creation of a cross-government Blueprint to Reduce Poverty in Nova Scotia with the Office of Strategy Management:
    - *building vibrant communities* by supporting collaborative ideas that build community capacity to address their own priorities in poverty-reduction;
    - *alleviating poverty* through connecting with Nova Scotians experiencing deep poverty to ensure they are accessing available supports and resources;
    - *enabling people* by supporting Nova Scotians in securing and retaining employment that uses their skills, abilities, and potential, and helps them achieve their financial goals; and
    - *preventing the cycle of intergenerational poverty* by strengthening supports for children and families.

  Investments made through processes including community grants and social innovation labs in these areas will culminate in the Blueprint, a practical strategy informed by diverse insights and real application. This initiative will work horizontally with other levels of government (Federal & Municipal), provincial departments, communities, and stakeholders from across the province to quickly implement initiatives to ensure more Nova Scotians are able to meaningfully participate in their communities, meet their basic needs, and become more independent.
- As part of *Standing Together: A Provincial Action Plan to Prevent Domestic Violence*, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women will work with the Department of Justice and other provincial and external partners to lead the development of a coordinated approach to domestic violence prevention, while providing victims support to rebuild their lives.

- DCS will partner with community organizations from across the province to deliver prevention and early intervention programming, including a second Families Plus pilot program for children, youth and families.
- DCS will collaborate with the Halifax Regional Municipality and Halifax Transit on a Bus Pass Pilot Project. Through the pilot, all ESIA clients and their dependents who live in HRM, close to a Halifax Transit bus stop, will be eligible to receive a bus pass. This will provide them with increased independence and integration into their communities.
- DCS will continue to collaborate with our First Nations partners to ensure our legislation, regulations, and policies are culturally informed. This has been done via an established tripartite working group involving Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, and DCS, as well as via funding to support the work of KMKNO (Assembly of Nova Scotian Mi'kmaq Chiefs) on these issues.

Departmental Outcomes

The Department of Community Services has implemented an Outcomes Management Framework. The OMF is an evidence-based accountability tool that will improve the way the department measures its performance. The framework is underpinned by 10 high-level outcomes (goals), for both our clients, and for our system (the way we operate).

Client Outcomes:

- clients have control over their own lives;
- clients are able to meet their basic needs;
- clients are safe from abuse and violence;
- clients are included in the community; and
- clients are attached to the labour market.

Department (System):

- supports and services are affordable and sustainable;
- supports and services are delivered efficiently;
- system of supports and services is a balanced mix of prevention and intervention;
- supports and services are accessible; and
- DCS staff and delivery partners are empowered to make a positive difference in people's lives.

The framework has been implemented and a series of indicators and measures have been developed for each of the core business areas. The department is monitoring and reporting on these outcomes.

Priorities, Activities and Initiatives for 2018-19

In 2018-19, the department is implementing several transformational initiatives that will advance our progress across these client and system outcomes.

Outcome: Clients have control of their own lives

DCS will work toward ensuring that clients have control over their own lives. People have control over their own lives when they are more independent and have freedom to make decisions.

Actions:

- The department will make significant investments in front end disability supports – including Flex with Family, Flex Independent, Independent Living Support, and Alternative Family Support – to improve programs for more participants. These investments will contribute toward a reduction in the waitlist for the Flex and ILS programs, and increasing the number of families in the AFS program. These actions will allow more participants to move into community-based options, becoming more independent, and living a life of their own choosing.
- The department will also make additional investments in the Enhanced Funding Support component of the Direct Family Support for Children and the Flex Individualized Funding programs. We have removed the waitlist – anyone eligible for the programs will be supported.
- The department will create an enhanced Employment Income Exemption Structure to allow clients to benefit more from employment income while in receipt of ESIA. Clients earning an income will keep more of it, enabling them to continue their path towards independence from ESIA.

Outcome: Clients are able to meet their basic needs

People need to be able to meet their basic needs if they are able to take care of themselves and their families and to have hope for a better future. In 2018-19, DCS will help clients meet their basic needs. This may mean financial help, support because of an emergency situation, or support finding the right place to live.

Actions

- The department is changing its policy and will no longer include child support payments as income when calculating eligibility for Income Assistance. This will put additional money into the hands of some low-income families with children, building a better future for them and their families.
- The Poverty Reduction Credit provides financial assistance to Nova Scotians living in poverty. Currently, eligible recipients receive $62.50 each July, October, January, and April ($250 for the year). In 2018-19, the department will double the Poverty Reduction Credit bringing it to $500 for the year. This increased support will help those living in poverty to meet their basic needs.
- The department will implement changes that will enable people receiving Income Assistance and working to retain more of their assistance, improving their ability to secure more employment.

Outcome: Clients are safe from abuse and violence

Living in fear of abuse and/or experiencing abuse or violence impacts a person's ability to grow, develop and achieve their full potential. For these reasons, DCS will work toward further ensuring clients are safe from abuse and violence in 2018-19.

Actions

- Private families and guardians will be financially supported to look after children who are not in the Minister's care, but whose parents are unable or unwilling to care for them. This will help prevent children from coming into the care of the Minister when care can be provided by families.
- As part of the redesign of Nova Scotia's child welfare system, the department will expand and diversify placement options for children and youth in care. Increasing the capacity of placement options will help to ensure that increasingly improved options are available for our children and youth.

Outcome: Clients are included in the community

In 2018-19, DCS will work toward including clients in the community, so they have opportunities to participate in either paid or supported employment, to volunteer, and to engage in local cultural, recreational, and social events.

Actions

- Eight Small Option Homes will be developed in 2018/19, continuing to provide more services for people with disabilities to live in their community.
- The department will work with service providers to expand day programming options to provide more structured work and/or supported employment for adults with disabilities. Expanding day programming options will allow persons with disabilities to develop the skills they need to reach their full potential and succeed in the community.

Outcome: Clients are attached to the labour market

For those who are able to work, opportunities for employment can mean independence, self-sufficiency, and economic and social security. In 2018-19, DCS will work towards attaching more clients to the labour market.

Actions

- To reduce intergenerational dependence on ESIA, the department will expand preventive supports and services to youth in care and dependents of ESIA clients. This will include an expansion of the Youth Development Initiative program, as well as an expansion of employment-focused services to youth living in residential facilities.
- The department will also pilot an early intervention program that will provide wrap-around youth-focused supports to new youth entrants to ESIA to help move them to labour market attachment and independence as quickly as possible.

Outcome: Supports and services are delivered efficiently

In 2018-19, DCS will work toward delivering programs and services to Nova Scotians with improved performance and more efficient use of departmental resources.

Actions

- Foster families are a foundation of a sustainable and effective child protection system. In 2018-19, the department will introduce a new Foster Parent Screening and Approval Process to make it faster and more efficient to approve foster families.
- DCS' Digital Services project will focus on developing new and convenient ways for individuals to interact with the department online. These services will be designed with input from users, and create a positive experience for people who would prefer to interact with the Department digitally.

Outcome: The system of supports and services is a balanced mix of prevention and intervention

In 2018-19, DCS will work toward providing services with a balanced approach that is more proactive, preventing more crises before they occur.

Actions

- The department plans to expand access to intensive family supports, including the implementation of an additional intensive family preservation program (Families Plus) in another location in Nova Scotia.
- In 2018-19, the department will operationalize sexual violence prevention and supports programming, as well as build on best practices and successes of the Sexual Violence Strategy. This will enable a continued coordinated response to sexual violence prevention and supports in Nova Scotia.
- The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women will work with stakeholders to develop *Standing Together: A Provincial Action Plan to Prevent Domestic Violence*. This plan will focus on improving the Province's support infrastructure and the development of a coordinated prevention strategy.
- The Educate to Work program will provide full funding for ESIA clients to attend NSCC or private career college programming. Supports include tuition, books, fees, transportation, childcare, tutoring, supplies and wage subsidy funding to gain work experience in their field of study and attach to the labour market post-graduation.
- DCS is focusing on improving and expanding preventative supports to youth at risk to disrupt the cycle of inter-generational poverty. Programming has been designed to support youth attached to DCS, as dependents of ESIA clients and youth in care, in a comprehensive career-focused way from the age of 12 through to post-secondary.
- Respite provides crucial support that increases the likelihood of participants being able to continue to live at home with support from their families. We are introducing a Respite and Supports Navigation Service that will provide matching for participants, families and Alternative Family Support providers who are looking for respite workers. The service will maximize respite opportunities by facilitating connections between different groups looking for respite.

Outcome: Supports and services are accessible

In 2018-19, the department will work toward ensuring that Nova Scotians know what DCS programs and services are available. Citizens will have better access to services by reducing physical, social and time barriers.

Actions

- Respite funding enables individuals living with their families to purchase supports related to their disabilities. Some families eligible for respite funding struggle to find qualified, reliable respite workers to fulfill this role. As a result, the department will implement a Respite Coordination Program, which will help match eligible participants and their families with potential respite workers. This new program will increase the consistency and efficacy in the delivery of respite funding and services for eligible DSP participants.

Outcome: DCS staff and delivery partners are empowered to make a positive difference in people's lives.

Actions:

- The Corporate Agreement Management project is intended to improve how DCS does business with service providers and allow organizations and government to better measure and track client outcomes. In 2018-19, DCS will continue to work directly with other select non-profit organizations to establish agreements to ensure consistent results, improve accountability, and achieve better alignment with the departmental mandate.

Important Deliverables and Opportunities

Innovation

Transformation is the embodiment of innovation. It involves doing the business of the department differently, by coming up with new ways to help clients be more independent and included in their communities.

Diversity

The Inclusion & Diversity Committee that serves DCS and Housing Nova Scotia, has developed a strategic plan. Various activities in 2018-19 will help us meet four Strategic Goals:

- Increase departmental and employee knowledge and awareness around diversity, inclusion, employment equity, cultural competency, and human rights;
- Encourage and recommend diversity and inclusion considerations for DCS and Housing programs and policies;
- Develop partnerships and collaborate with government and across communities and stakeholders; and
- Enhance knowledge, leadership, and ability of committee members.

Operational and Service Excellence

- Services will be designed by working collaboratively across all functional areas of the department (and with partners) to provide solutions and services to clients that meet our objectives in a consistent and efficient manner.
- There is a direct correlation between positive employee engagement and improved client service. For this reason, internal communications and engagement will be strengthened by establishing employee engagement teams, focused on areas that are important to employees and departmental outcomes.

Federal Provincial Relations

Federal/Provincial/Territorial Social Services Forum

- In 2018-19, Nova Scotia will co-chair the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers for Social Services Forum for the final year. Priorities of the forum include: Poverty Reduction, Indigenous Children and Youth in Care; and Disability and Accessibility Issues.

Federal/Provincial/Territorial Housing Forum

- Nova Scotia will work with the provinces & territories and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation on a new multilateral housing framework which outlines broad principles for working together to achieve better housing solutions for those in need. This multilateral framework sets the foundation for future bilateral funding agreements that will be developed in 2018-19.

Conclusion

This business plan provides an understanding of some of the key departmental initiatives that DCS will be undertaking in 2018-19. The department's initiatives will help to afford its clients the opportunity to live a fulfilling and rewarding life, and will contribute to making Nova Scotia an even better place for those who call it home.

Financial Summary

Departmental Expenses Summary ($ thousands)			
Programs and Services	2017-2018 Estimate	2017-2018 Forecast	2018-2019 Estimate
Senior Management	825	901	836
Policy and Innovation	10,323	8,132	11,692
Corporate Services Unit	4,338	4,342	4,367
Service Design and Delivery	103,115	105,554	105,894
Disability Support Program	333,330	338,235	351,548
Child, Youth and Family Support Program	92,460	96,072	95,506
Housing Services	47,528	49,312	58,326
Employment Services and Income Assistance Program	348,543	346,451	350,352
Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women	9,159	9,159	11,177
Total - Departmental Expenses	**949,621**	**958,158**	**989,698**
Ordinary Recoveries	**18,364**	**18,119**	**19,303**
Funded Staff (# of FTEs) Department Funded Staff	**1,603.0**	**1,621.9**	**1,621.5**

Note:

For Ordinary Revenues, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 2.

For TCA Purchase Requirements, see Estimates and Supplementary Detail Book, Chapter 1